

A photograph of four cyclists riding on a paved road that curves through a landscape. On the left is a dense forest of evergreen trees. On the right is a steep, rocky hillside. The cyclists are wearing helmets and casual riding gear. The lighting suggests it's either early morning or late afternoon, with long shadows.

# ***SCORP*** ***Program*** ***Evaluation***

**IDAHO**

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# The Best Laid Plans: A Program Evaluation of Idaho's SCORPs

## Introduction

Ah, the best laid plans. So often they really do go astray. But are there ways to improve a plan's chances of success? In this section of Idaho's SCORTP we will review previous Idaho plans and make recommendations for how to improve those plans and the SCORTP process in general. (Note: Idaho's 1998 and current plans include elements recognizing the importance of tourism in the state, thus creating the acronym SCORTP. All earlier plans were called SCORP. For this element of the plan I will refer to all as SCORP from this point for the sake of convenience.)

## Background

As the need for additional outdoor recreation resources in the United States became apparent following World War II, the Izaak Walton League of America, one of the country's oldest conservation groups, spearheaded an effort to create a national commission to examine related issues. The result was the national Outdoor Recreation Resources Review Commission (ORRRC), created by Congress in 1958.

One of the major recommendations of ORRRC was that, "A Federal funding program should be established to provide grants to States that would stimulate and assist them to meet new demands for outdoor recreation and to pay for additions to the Federal recreation estate."

On the Commission's recommendation the Kennedy administration set out to make such a federal funding source a reality in 1962, but it wasn't until September of 1964 that it became a reality as Public Law 88-578, the Land and Water Conservation Fund Act. Congress identified three sources of funding in the original legislation: proceeds from the sale of surplus federal real property, motorboat fuel taxes, and recreation fees on federal lands. Those sources, however, did not raise as much revenue as Congress had hoped. From FY 1966 through FY 1968 about \$100 million came in each year. To remedy that situation, Congress identified another funding source, receipts from Outer Continental Shelf oil leases. Beginning in FY 1969, Congress authorized a total of \$200 million annually for LWCF. Authorizations fluctuated over the years, peaking in 1979 at \$369 million. In recent years funding for states has ranged from zero to as much as \$140 million in FY 2002.

As is common with federal funding, states are required to fulfill certain obligations in order to receive the money. To qualify for funding under the LWCF program, each state must submit a Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan to the Secretary of the Interior through the

National Park Service. If the plan is approved, that state will remain eligible to receive grant funds for outdoor recreation for the life of the plan, which is typically five years. In Idaho, the State retains half of the annual allocation for projects and distributes the other half to counties and cities through a matching grant program. One major component of SCORP plans is the creation of criteria for how grant applications will be judged.

SCORP plans, then, are a key part of the program. The requirement for the plans is found in the enabling legislation for LWCF itself. Such details of program implementation are often left to those writing rules. The authors of the legislation clearly believed in the importance of planning. In practice, though, the plan often supplants the planning.

## **The Problem**

While a great deal of effort goes into producing a SCORP plan, much less effort is spent on implementation. The plans are always in danger of becoming largely pro forma documents produced to fill a federal requirement. The goal can become more the production of the plan than planning itself.

The Land and Water Conservation Fund Act states, in part:

### **Sec. 4601-4. - Land and water conservation provisions; statement of purposes**

The purposes of this part are to assist in preserving, developing, and assuring accessibility to all citizens of the United States of America of present and future generations and visitors who are lawfully present within the boundaries of the United States of America such quality and quantity of outdoor recreation resources as may be available and are necessary and desirable for individual active participation in such recreation and to strengthen the health and vitality of the citizens of the United States.

Planning is mentioned several times in the Act, but it is a means to the end, not an end in itself. The legislation requires an implementation plan to be included in every SCORP. Yet, inclusion of that plan within the plan is not implementation itself.

## **Program Evaluation**

Before beginning the program evaluation, it was my opinion that there were two weaknesses in SCORP planning: 1) the lack of any kind of measurement for implementation, and 2) the lack of any report on goal completion. It seemed to me that those weaknesses were really two sides of the same problem. If regular measurement of goals identified in each plan were included in implementation, the likelihood of those goals being achieved would be much higher. The adage, “what gets measured gets done,” would seem to apply.

I decided to evaluate SCORP plans produced over the years in Idaho. To what extent were they successful? How could they be improved? For this study, I chose four measures of success:

- 1). Continuing certification of eligibility under Land and Water Conservation Fund rules.
- 2). Evaluation of the documents based on planning criteria.
- 3). Completion of identified plan goals.
- 4). A satisfaction survey of current SCORP Task Force members.

Recommendations based on the above and on a review of literature will conclude the evaluation.

## **Continuing Eligibility**

As stated earlier, a regularly produced SCORP plan approved by NPS is required for continued eligibility for grant funding under the Land and Water Conservation Fund program. If certain required elements are included in a SCORP, the National Park Service is likely to approve the plan. States are required to include a wetlands priority component in their SCORPs, evaluate supply and demand for outdoor recreation within their borders, and develop a prioritized list of actions from which criteria for awarding LWCF grants can be developed.

From the standpoint of continuing LWCF eligibility, Idaho's SCORP plans have always been a complete success. All have met the minimum requirements and received NPS approval.

## **Document Evaluation**

The planning profession has operated for years with few criteria for evaluating the quality of plans. In 1997, William C. Baer, PhD, a professor of urban planning and development at the University of Southern California, developed criteria for plan assessment in an article for the *Journal of the American Planning Association*. In evaluating Idaho's SCORP plans, I used his suggested criteria in two areas, Adequacy of Context and Plan Format (See table next page).

While the plans under review at least minimally met most of the criteria suggested by Baer, there were six areas (highlighted in the table) where weakness were found:

1. Background information—Most of the documents had some background information from which a reader could infer the reason for the development of a plan, but it was rarely spelled out.

2. Purpose—Again, a reader could infer purpose in most documents, but it was not explicitly stated.

3. Type of plan—Readers rarely know what to expect as they delve into an Idaho SCORP plan.

4. Executive summary—Even when included, this information is not labeled as such.

5. Preparation time—None of the plans addressed the number of hours that went into plan preparation.



## SCORP Document Evaluation Table

<b>Contextual Evaluation</b>	<b>1970</b>	<b>1973</b>	<b>1977</b>	<b>1983</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1998</b>
Is the political/legal context of the plan explained (e.g., meeting state mandates, public discussion and consideration, top priority issues)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the administrative authority for preparation indicated (Council or Planning Commission resolution, state law, Federal requirement, etc.)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the role of the preparing agency or firm adequately explained (e.g., a letter of transmittal)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is background information presented (e.g., reasons for plan's presentation)?	Yes	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak	Weak
Is it clear who the plan is for (e.g., citizens, agency head, city council, board)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the purpose of the plan explained (e.g., study, information, decision, action, conveyance of advice)?	Yes	Yes	Weak	Weak	Weak	Yes
Is the type of plan and its scope reported early on, to alert the reader about what to expect? (E.g., the reader is alerted that this plan is highly quantitative and analytic; far ranging or narrow; specific, and technical.)	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Is an overview/summary provided (e.g., an "Executive Summary")?	Yes	No	Yes	No	No	No
Is the source of funding for the plan shown (e.g., federal, state, local, private donor, agency)?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the amount of time in preparation shown (total person/hrs., weeks, etc.)?	No	No	No	No	No	No
<b>Format Evaluation</b>						
Are the size and format conducive to the use intended? (For example, an oversize plan is hard to file and copy, hence does not lend itself to constant reference and day-to-day use.)	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is the date of publication shown?	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are the authors shown, to indicate professional responsibility (names of personnel who worked on the plan, as well as agency or firm names)?	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Is there a table of contents?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are pages numbered?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Are graphics used to best advantage?	No	2	2	No	No	No
Is the plan attractively laid out?	2	2	2	Yes	Yes	Yes

<sup>1</sup> Authorship is by inference, not explicitly stated

<sup>2</sup> Given technical capabilities available at the time

6. Use of graphics—Early plans used few, if any, graphics (photos, illustrations, etc.). This is probably because they were not readily available and it was expensive to use them. Though the use of graphics has become increasingly simple over the years, they are rarely used in Idaho plans.

## **Goal Completion**

Another measure of program success is the extent to which it has met its goals. Goals and objectives were enumerated as such in the 1977 and 1998 Idaho SCORPs. In other plans similar action items were listed as “Activity Areas” (1990), “Topic Areas” (1983), and “Needs” in 1970 and 1973. For the purpose of this study I developed a list of items the plans addressed (See table next page), categorizing them as “issues/actions.” Some grouping of similar items was necessary in order to keep the list to a manageable length for review and in order to track items across plans.

To determine the status of SCORP issues/actions, I reviewed the list with former IDPR Recreation Bureau Chief Jim Poulsen, who has been with the agency and involved in SCORP plans for more than 30 years. Of the 75 issues/actions identified, only 17 have been substantially completed, though many have had some work done on them.

Even though some of the goals have been met, there is little documented evidence that SCORP planning efforts were responsible for those successes. Only two could be largely attributed to SCORP planning efforts: the creation of a state trails plan and the institutionalization of an annual Governor’s Conference on Recreation and Tourism. Even those items were also promoted through other efforts.

Nearly half of the issues/actions, 35, have appeared only once in the six SCORP plans reviewed. In some cases they did not appear again because the item was completed. Most, though, simply popped up once and inexplicably went away. This would seem to indicate the issues/actions were not of sufficient importance to be included a second time around. That begs the question: Why were they included in the first place?

Evaluating the plans on the percentage of completed goals and objectives has face validity. The biggest obstacle to such an evaluation is that there has never been a review of accomplishments from SCORP to SCORP. A description of accomplishments from each previous plan, along with documentation of how goals were met, would provide an ongoing measure of program success.

The tables on the following two pages list the issues and actions from Idaho’s SCORP plans. Items highlighted in green have appeared in the plans at least three times over the years. Yellow highlighted items have appeared in the two most recent SCORPs.

## SCORP Issue/Action Completion Table 1

Issue/Action	1970	1973	1977	1983	1990	1998	Done
Provide recreation near urban areas	X		X				P
Need for developing nearby camping	X						P
Improve highway rest areas	X				X		
Assist Lava Hot Springs	X						
Coordinate rec. planning efforts	X		X	X	X	X	P
Provide for tourist needs	X						P
Funding for operation and maintenance	X	X				X	
Provide for the needs of the handicapped	X		X		X	X	P
Preservation and protection of natural and historical resources		X	X	X		X	P
Replacement of lost park lands		X	X				X
Encourage private recreation resource development		X			X	X	P
Water resource protection		X	X				P
Inclusion of park land in new development		X	X				
Expedite Wild and Scenic Rivers Act		X	X				X
Expedite the Wilderness Act		X					
Expedite National Trails Act		X					
More federal funding		X			X		P
Promote National Outdoor Recreation Plan		X	X				
Inventory of significant Idaho recreation resources and acquisition prioritization		X	X				P
Improve recreation research		X	X	X	X	X	P
Control off-road vehicles on public land		X			X		
Acquisition and development of facilities		X		X			P
Create Idaho Wild, Scenic and Recreation River System		X	X				X
Implementation of "model concept" of planning		X					
Replacement of recreation land lost to highways		X					
State review of private recreation projects		X	X				
Determine recreation carrying capacities		X				X	P
Develop education programs to help citizens understand the importance of natural resources, recreation and tourism		X	X		X	X	P
Identification and development of scenic routes		X					X
Designation of recreation as a beneficial use of water		X					X
Develop additional access to recreational waters		X	X				P
Establish Youth Conservation Corps		X					P
Establish park and rec. departments for medium, large communities		X	X				
Develop local recreation master plans		X					
Energy conservation in recreation			X				
Coordination of recreation activities and programs			X				
Provide technical assistance to communities and school districts			X	X			P

P signifies partial completion, X signifies completion



## SCORP Issue/Action Completion Table 2

Issue/Action	1970	1973	1977	1983	1990	1998	Done
Provide motorbike parks near communities			X				
Create state environmental policies act			X				
Establish a state greenways system			X		X	X	
Establish max. noise levels for ORVs			X				X
Incorporate ORV user education into state driver training classes			X				
Provide incentives for landowners to retain open space for recreation			X				P
Encourage EPA to give priority to water pollution projects affecting swimming			X				
Encourage wildlife habitat on private land			X				X
Seek more volunteers			X		X		P
Create state funding for outdoor rec.			X		X	X	P
Complete state park master plans			X				P
Establish nature study centers close to urban areas			X				P
Encourage establishment of joint management plans on selected rivers				X			
Find funding for water-based recreation				X			P
Seek public involvement in planning				X			P
Develop a cooperative research program for outdoor recreation and tourism				X			X
Conduct regular SCORP updates				X	X		
Create/maintain outdoor rec. databases				X	X	X	P
Ensure access to outdoor recreation					X		P
Statewide recreational trails system					X	X	
Develop a tourism signing program					X		X
Designate a State Centennial Trail					X		X
Encourage utilities to make their resources available for recreation					X		P
Provide more information centers					X	X	X
Provide more RV dump stations					X		X
Improve recreation liability law					X		
Develop a state trails plan					X		X
Encourage ITD to more fully consider bike/footpaths in highway planning					X		X
Convene regular Governors Conferences on Outdoor Recreation and Tourism					X		X
Develop IdaHost program					X		X
Encourage recreation safety education					X		P
Develop a process for citizens to designate where their fees go					X		X
Establish a recreation and tourism information network					X	X	P
Develop new strategic planning process						X	P
Identify benefits of recreation						X	P
Unify communications and marketing for outdoor recreation and tourism						X	P
Recognize importance of transportation in outdoor recreation						X	P

P signifies partial completion, X signifies completion



## Partner Satisfaction

Idaho has created a SCORP Task Force to assist in the development of SCORP plans. Task Force members are recruited from agencies and organizations with a vested interest in outdoor recreation. IDPR makes an effort to include representation from as many interested organizations as possible, though staff turnover in the organizations occasionally creates short-term vacancies. Federal agencies represented include the Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Reclamation, US Army Corps of Engineers and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. State agencies included are the departments of Lands, Fish and Game, Health and Welfare, Commerce, Water Resources and Agriculture. Regional officers of the Idaho Recreation and Park Association, typically city and county recreation directors or staff, represent cities and counties.

The extent to which these task force members are involved in the actual production of the plan varies. They sometimes provide research important to the plan, including whole studies on certain issues. Task Force members sometimes write certain sections of the plan. At a minimum, the Task Force provides advice and direction to the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation in development and implementation of the plan. The group is especially involved in identifying issues each SCORP will address.

Since each SCORP is required to be “comprehensive,” involving representatives (often referred to by IDPR as “partners”) from every level of government with interests in outdoor recreation is imperative. The effectiveness of the effort is tied closely to partner satisfaction with the planning process, often called “buy-in.” It seemed logical that a measure of partner satisfaction was imperative to the program evaluation.

To measure partner satisfaction, I conducted a survey of the 25 current SCORP Task Force members. The survey consisted of 15 questions, using a Likert scale of one to seven, with one representing the answer “strongly agree” and seven representing the answer “strongly disagree.” I obtained Task Force email addresses from IDPR and sent each member a link to a web-based survey. The survey page was protected from search engine spiders to help assure unauthorized participants did not accidentally come across it. The anonymous survey allowed only one connection per IP number (a unique computer identifier) to help assure that each participant responded only once. Twenty-two of the 25 Task Force members responded, giving a participation rate of 88 percent.

## **Analysis of Partner Survey**

I asked a series of questions designed to elicit Task Force members' (hereafter referred to as partners) attitudes and opinions in these areas:

- IDPR's management of the SCORP process
- Ease of use of SCORP product
  - Ease of use of electronic documents
  - Ease of use for printed documents
- Value of research
- Current value of SCORP
- Potential value of SCORP
- Value of interim measurement in SCORP

### ***IDPR's management of the SCORP process***

In recent years, states producing SCORPs have been encouraged by the National Park Service to work closely with other recreation providers in the process. In order to find out how IDPR is doing in that area, partners were asked to respond to the statement:

*"I feel very involved in the SCORP process."*

While 40.9 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement, only 22.7 percent agreed or strongly agreed. The median was at 5, just to the negative side of center. This indicates that the agency has some work to do in this area. Partners will not feel ownership in the plan if they do not have a sense of involvement in its production.

Partners were also asked to respond to the statement:

*"The Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation has always dedicated enough time and money to SCORP."*

More than two-thirds had no strong opinion on this one. Responses were clustered around the middle, with 68.2 percent selecting 3, 4 or 5. The median was 4, right at the center point.

### ***Ease of use of SCORP Product***

While SCORPs have traditionally been printed documents, I was interested in gauging partner receptivity to producing and making the plans available electronically. I developed a series of six statements regarding the ease of use of printed and electronic documents in general and of printed SCORP documents specifically. The statements and analysis of responses to each follow.

*"I find it easier to read a printed document than an online document."*

Exactly 50 percent of those responding either agreed or strongly agreed with that statement. Fourteen percent, disagreed or strongly disagreed. With a median of 2.5 and the strong agreement response, partners have a clear

preference for printed over electronic documents.

Circumstances could cause a change in preference. Partners may prefer reading printed documents in general, but there could be times when a specific need might outweigh that preference. To help gauge this I asked for responses to the statement:

*"It is easier to find something in an electronic document than a paper document."*

Respondents were largely neutral on this statement, with 64 percent selecting 3, 4 or 5 and a median at 4. Eighteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, with 14 percent on the opposite end, agreeing or strongly agreeing.

To double check responses to this statement, I included its reverse further down in the instrument:

*"It is easier to find something in a paper document than an electronic document."*

Answers were fairly consistent in that 59 percent selected 3, 4 or 5 and the median was a fraction over 4. Nineteen percent agreed (none strongly agreed), while 18 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed.



While most respondents clearly prefer printed documents for ease of reading, their preferences when it comes to search capabilities are not nearly as dramatic.

To further test electronic/print preferences respondents were asked to respond to a statement specific to SCORP documents:

*"SCORP documents should be all electronic."*

In what would seem to be a dramatic turnaround, 50 percent of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Twenty-seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median on this statement was 3, just into the positive side. Interpretation of the statement might account for the disparity between the responses to this statement and the earlier statement where respondents showed a clear preference for printed documents. Respondents may have assumed the statement referred to

**One recommendation of the SCORP evaluation is to use more graphic elements to help make the document more readable. Sometimes a graphic needs no other purpose than to break up a long block of text, such as in this example.**

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making all SCORP documents available electronically, as well as in printed form. If that was their reading, the partners may have been showing a willingness to supply the document electronically to those who preferred that format, not a willingness to forego a printed document.

To determine readability of recent SCORP documents specifically, I asked partners to respond to two statements, the first of which was:

*“SCORP documents are easy to read.”*

Neutrality was overwhelming, with 46 percent coming down squarely in the middle at 4. Sixty-eight percent answered with either a 3, 4 or 5 and the median was 4. Twenty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. It is interesting to note that there were no respondents who disagreed or strongly disagreed. While this is far from a strong endorsement of recent SCORP products, it is also not an indicator of any major problem with readability.

Finally, I asked partners to respond to this statement regarding the document itself:

*“The format of the most recent SCORP was good.”*

Fifteen percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Fully 80 percent selected a 3 or 4. With the median also at 3, this indicates that there are no serious problems with the most recent format of SCORP, at least in the eyes of the partners.

### **Current value of SCORP**

An acceptable format for a document matters little if people are not using it. There were 15 statements in the survey instrument designed to measure the usefulness of SCORP in the everyday lives of recreation planners. Seven of the statements were posed as positives and five were posed as negatives.

*“I refer to SCORP often in the course of my work.”*

Fifty-five percent of partner respondents disagreed or strongly disagreed with that statement, while only 18 percent agreed or strongly agreed. The median was 6, also indicating disagreement. Using this measure alone, we could say that IDPR’s partners do not often use SCORP in the course of their work.

Could a lack of use be explained by something lacking in the plan? Partners were asked to respond to the following statement in order to address that.

*“SCORP covers most necessary areas of need in outdoor recreation planning.”*

Fourteen percent disagreed with the statement (none strongly disagreed). Another 9 percent agreed (none strongly agreed). Everyone else was clustered around the middle with a median of 4.

If SCORP is to be of value, planners should be able to cite it in decision making.

*“I sometimes use SCORP to justify my decisions.”*

Eighteen percent agreed with that statement and 5 percent disagreed. There were no responses strongly disagreeing or disagreeing. Again, most were clustered around the middle with a median of 4.

*“SCORP is a useful tool for bringing agencies together.”*

This statement brought stronger response. Fifty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed, while only 5 percent disagreed. The median was 2, significantly toward the agreement end of the scale. Partners may not be using the document in their everyday work, but they seem to feel the process has value in encouraging agencies to work together.

*“I feel empowered in my job because of the SCORP goals.”*

Eighteen percent agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, while 23 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was at 4. There is little indication SCORP goals are especially empowering.

*“There is a need for a statewide, coordinated, multi-agency outdoor recreation planning effort.”*

Whether the vehicle is SCORP or not, is statewide planning needed? The partners strongly supported such a planning effort, with 73 percent agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statement. Five percent disagreed. The median was located decisively toward the side of agreement, at 2.

*“SCORP helps us identify needs in outdoor recreation.”*

Sixty percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while none disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was at 2. Identifying outdoor recreation needs is a key element of SCORP. The partners seem to think it is working.

*“SCORP is a valuable outdoor recreation planning tool in Idaho.”*

Thirty-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed, while 5 percent disagreed. All others were slightly on the agree side of the middle. The median was 3.

In order to double check results, five statements were posed as negatives.

*“I don’t see the connection between SCORP and anything I do.”*

Nine percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while 41 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was at 4.5, slightly toward disagreement.

*“I feel restricted in my job because of the SCORP identified goals.”*

Responses to this statement were some of the strongest in the survey. Sixty-seven percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. Five percent agreed. The median was heavily on the side of disagreement at 6. Whatever else SCORP does, it does not seem to be a hindrance.

The following statement was included because I have sometimes heard this particular criticism.

*“SCORP is just a compilation of existing reports.”*

Forty-one percent agreed or strongly agreed, while 9 percent disagreed. The median was in the middle at 4.

*“SCORP has little value in Idaho.”*

Forty-one percent disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement. None agreed or strongly agreed. The median was 5.

Does SCORP sit on shelves and gather dust?

*“The result of all the effort put into SCORP is a document nobody ever uses.”*

Twenty-four percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement.

Thirty-three percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was at 4.

*“SCORP means little to me because we will rarely receive LWCF funds.”*

Twenty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed and 20 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was 4.

Although the SCORP document itself does not seem to get a lot of use by planners, they do find value in the process and they feel strongly that a statewide outdoor recreation planning effort is worthwhile.



### ***Potential Value of SCORP***

Do the partners see the potential for greater value from SCORP? I included three statements to gather responses in that area.

*“SCORP could be a powerful tool in addressing recreation issues in Idaho.”*

Seventy-three percent of the partners either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, while five percent disagreed. The median 2.14.

*“We can use SCORP data to make a case for additional recreation funding.”*

Fifty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed. Nine percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was 2.

*“Outdoor recreation would be well served if more people paid attention to SCORP.”*

Forty-three percent agreed or strongly agreed, while none disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was 3.

Based on these responses, the partners see good potential for SCORP in the future.



## **Value of Research**

As stated earlier, an assessment of demand for outdoor recreation opportunities is a key SCORP element. In order to find out what that demand is and gauge public opinion, someone must conduct research. I wanted to know how confident the partners were in that research.

*“The more we find out about people’s attitudes and opinions, the more we will be able to solve recreation problems.”*

This statement garnered the strongest positive reaction of any. Ninety-one percent responded that they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement. Response to the statement also produced the median closest to the agreement end of the scale at 1.5.

*“We can only know the needs of recreationists through research (such as surveys).”*

Thirty-two percent agreed or strongly agreed, while 14 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was 3. Though the partners are strong proponents of research, they also recognize that there are other ways of knowing about recreationists.

*“The more we find out about people’s attitudes and opinions, the more we will be able to solve recreation problems.”*

This statement brought another strongly positive response. Sixty-eight percent agreed or strongly agreed. Five percent strongly disagreed. The median was 2.

The partners seem to have strong support for research.

## **Value of Interim Measurement in SCORP**

It was my belief that the SCORP process would greatly benefit if there were one or more forms of measurement included in the implementation process. I provided four statements to help gauge partner opinion on that issue.

*“It would be easier to produce a five-year SCORP if we updated its components annually.”*

While on its face this is not a question strictly addressing measurement, I believe updates themselves are a form of measurement. For instance, reporting to what extent a goal has been accomplished is measurement. Fifty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed. Twenty-three percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was 2.

*“There is little coordinated effort to accomplish SCORP identified goals.”*

Twenty-five percent agreed or strongly agreed, while 10 percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was right in the middle at 4.

*“I would like to see an annual report on SCORP progress.”*

Forty-six percent agreed or strongly agreed with this one. Fourteen percent disagreed or strongly disagreed. The median was 3.

## **Summary of Partner Survey**

There was no strong indication of dissatisfaction with SCORP in Idaho. However, the Idaho Department of Parks and Recreation needs to do more to ensure that partners have a sense of involvement in the SCORP process. While they may not feel as involved as they should be, they do strongly support the process itself. They also seem to believe SCORP has the potential to be a powerful tool in addressing recreation needs. One way of doing that might be to use data gathered in the course of producing SCORP to make a case for additional funding for outdoor recreation.

The partners prefer printed plans but seem willing to also offer them electronically. No obvious failings in readability were uncovered. To the extent that greater accessibility and readability might make the plan more useful, it is worth exploring ways to improve both. It is important to point out that the partners did not often use the plan, but also did not seem to think it was missing major elements.

Partners believe SCORP helps identify needs in outdoor recreation, and they strongly believe research is a good tool to identify those needs.

There seems to be sufficient support for measurement to justify including it as a regular part of SCORP implementation.

## **Recommendations**

### **Consistency**

The lack of commonality from one plan to the next makes it difficult to track progress and identify trends. Establishing some uniformity in the way plans are laid out would help readers find what they are looking for. Every plan should have all of the elements identified by Baer as listed in SCORP Document Evaluation Table. Of particular importance are an executive summary, a background section describing the purpose of the plan, and a section outlining exactly who was involved in producing the plan and how long it took.

In measuring outdoor recreation demand, there should be more consistency in selecting the recreational activities and deciding how they are measured. Establishing trends in this area without consistent measurement is nearly impossible. This would not preclude adding new activities when they become popular, or dropping activities that fall out of vogue. It does speak to being cautious about doing either once the categories are established.

Consistency in measurement of recreation supply through the Outdoor Recreation Facility Inventory is important for the same reasons. Definitions of facility categories would also help assure the same items were being counted each time. For instance, does a tent site in a campground mean tent-only site, or can RVers who do not need electricity and other amenities use it?

### **Interim Measures**

When a plan is published, those involved in the process tend to breathe a sigh of relief and put SCORP out of their minds for a while. Certainly there is no urgency to move forward when the next plan is not due for five

more years. The danger is that they will put SCORP out of their minds for about four years, coming back to the process reluctantly when it is time to produce another plan.

An annual measurement of progress on SCORP-identified goals would keep the process moving. Interim measurement would show where the plan is succeeding and where it might be stalled or failing. It would do so while there is still time to affect a positive outcome. The measurement could be in the form of a formal annual report or even a published scorecard listing the goals and their percent of completion.

In the past, the SCORP Task Force has met irregularly. Quarterly meetings of the group would facilitate evaluation of progress on goals and would serve as another form of measurement. Regular meetings would also help meet the long-term goal of providing coordinated outdoor recreation planning among agency providers.

## **Evaluation of the Achievement of Goals**

None of the plans examined addressed past achievements based on SCORP identified goals. Some goals were carried over from plan to plan, but many were simply dropped off without explanation. If SCORP is to become a serious planning tool it must include a review of goal achievement as a regular component of the plan.

## **Research**

Improving outdoor recreation research has been a SCORP goal in Idaho since 1973. Though some progress has been made toward that end, research is still spotty and often not well designed. Even so, SCORP Task Force members strongly believe in the value of research.

Research on recreation needs and demand should be largely consistent from year to year in order to establish trends. To assure that planners have more accurate information, such research must be conducted more than once every five or ten years. Sampling public opinions and determining current needs should be an ongoing process. There is some value in conducting assessments on a statewide basis, but statistically valid surveys need to be taken at least down to the county level in order to identify local needs.

The SCORP Task Force should identify additional research needs for the five-year period of each plan and list what research is to be accomplished at the beginning of each year. Determination of research needs should be based on data from regular public assessments as well as analysis by recreation professionals on the Task Force.

All research, whether conducted in-house or contracted should follow professional standards for instrument design, statistical reliability and analysis. Every research report should include a detailed summary of methodology.



## **Establishment of Outdoor Recreation Databases**

Ever since the Idaho SCORP of 1983, the plans have recognized the need for creating and maintaining outdoor recreation databases. Though the need was recognized, very little has been accomplished toward that goal.

Databases should be developed as soon as possible for the Outdoor Recreation Facilities Inventory (ORFI) and for Idaho wetlands information. Though data are routinely gathered for each of those SCORP components, neither has been computerized. Computerizing the ORFI would allow all levels of recreation providers to update their own data and use all relevant data for their own planning purposes. Once those and other relevant databases are developed, they must be made available on the Internet so they are readily accessible by planners and the public.

Other databases that would be useful to planners include:

- Registry of LWCF projects in Idaho
- Registry of other outdoor recreation grant programs
  - Snowmobile
  - Waterways
  - Boating Safety
  - Off-Highway Vehicle
  - Recreation Trails
  - Park N' Ski
- Vehicle Registration Data
  - Boats
  - Snowmobiles
  - Off-Highway Vehicles
  - Recreational Vehicles
- Visitation Figures
  - State Parks
  - BLM
  - NPS
  - Forest Service
- Recreation Accident Information:
  - Boats
  - Snowmobiles
  - Off-Highway Vehicles

## **Internet Presence for Idaho's SCORP**

With the advent of the Internet, it is now possible to keep a planning process current through frequent updates and the use of live data (as described above). Although the federal requirement to produce a SCORP document is likely to continue for the foreseeable future, an Outdoor Recreation Data Center would better serve planners and the public. Information required for the plan could reside on a SCORP website where it could be easily retrieved and updated.

An Outdoor Recreation Data Center could provide more in-depth information than could be put in a printed plan. It could also provide a public forum for recreation issues. The site might facilitate solicitation of public comment by providing links to proposed actions by federal agencies as well as agency contact information.